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A Preliminary Assessment of the Impact on Alaska of Participation in the Interstate Compact

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Summary

The Interstate Compact for the Supervision of Parolees and Probationers is an agreement whereby one state agrees to provide supervision for offenders on community release from other states. Participants in the interstate compact agree that any state will accept supervision of a parolee or probationer providing the offender has proper residence either as a resident of that state or with family, and that he/she is able to find employment. Major increases in Alaska's prison population over the past decade have been accompanied by corresponding increases in the number of persons under probation/parole supervision and in the caseloads of individual probation officers. Using a master listing of all persons under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Corrections from 1976 to 1983, the Justice Center at University of Alaska Anchorage made a preliminary assessment of the impact on Alaska of participation in the Interstate Compact. From 1976 to 1983, Alaska processed 1,551 offenders through the Interstate Compact, of whom 999 were received for supervision from other states (64.4% of the total) and 552 (35.6%) were sent to other states. Based on this data, the interstate compact has not yet been an equitable arrangement for any city in Alaska: each city has seen a greater number of incoming than of outgoing transfers.

A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT ON ALASKA
OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERSTATE COMPACT

by

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INTRODUCTION

The interstate compact for the supervision of parolees and probationers is an agreement whereby one state agrees to provide supervision for offenders on community release from other states. The compact was initiated as a result of the federal Crime Control Consent Act of 1934. This Act permitted two or more states to enter into agreements for crime prevention. In recognition of the mobility of the American population, of the difficulties of maintaining supervision of offenders across state lines and of the need for formal arrangements to monitor offenders, the interstate commission on crime drafted the compact which was signed by twenty-five states in 1937. A national organization, the Parole and Probation Compact Administrators' Association, was developed to assist in securing interstate compact cooperation. This association along with the Interstate Commission on Crime was integrated into the council of state governments in 1942. Since that time the council has played a major role in providing services for the compact administrators, collecting and disseminating information and publishing reference books and manuals. Today all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands participate in the compact. (Council of State Governments, 1978, 1966; Brendes, 1968).

Participants in the interstate compact agree that any state will accept supervision of a parolee or probationer providing the offender has proper residence either as a resident of that state or with family, and that he/she is able to find employment. If

these conditions are not met, the receiving state can choose whether or not to accept them. The supervising, or receiving state must use the same standards of supervision for interstate cases as they do for their own parolees and probationers.

The sentencing state may recall a probationer or parolee being supervised under the compact at any time without formalities. Legal requirements to obtain extradition of fugitives from justice are waived by the states participating in the compact. Before leaving the sentencing state the parolee or probationer also signs a waiver of extradition (Council of State Governments, 1978).

The number of people under interstate compact supervision has increased steadily over time. Annual and semiannual reports on the movement of offenders under the compact were provided to the authors by the council of state governments. The number under supervision for selected years is displayed in Figure 1 below. It should be noted that every state did not submit data for each report requested; number of states reporting is indicated in the figure. The number of prisoners involved in the compact has increased four-fold in the last 34 years. The available national data was gathered in order to provide comparisons with the Alaska data to be described, but, as will be seen, the data is not really comparable.

The compact has operated since its inception in a manner consistent with traditional views of the purposes and functions of probation and parole, specifically rehabilitation of offenders

and monitoring of behavior of offenders in the communities to which they are assigned. Changes in the criminal justice system in recent years have made new demands on supervising agencies and there is considerable interest in the extent to which such changes will impact the interstate compact and in the ways in which the compact might play an expanding role in the development and implementation of innovative programs and procedures (e.g., pretrial diversion programs, house arrest, fees for supervision, technological supervision, etc.) The National Institute of Corrections conducted a survey of compact participants with these considerations in mind (NIC, 1986).

The NIC information center sent a survey questionnaire to corrections officials, compact administrators, parole boards and other concerned people asking for comments on the compact. Respondents were positive about the compact in concept but did suggest improvements. The following areas were listed as needing greater structure by 70% or more of the respondents:

- criteria for accepting/rejecting transfers;
- guidelines for reporting offender progress or violation;
- time frames for return of violators;
- criteria for overriding compact policy; and
- timelines for completion of the refocation process (NIC, 1986:30).

Thus, although the compact was viewed favorably by most of the respondents, most of them also saw a need to improve compact operations and guidelines. While the survey conducted by the NIC provides information useful to the future of the compact, it did

not provide data on the flow of transfers between and among states.

Participation in the compact demonstrates a willingness on the part of the receiving state to supervise probationers and parolees who were originally residents of the state, or who have support networks in the state, or who may be seeking a "new life." It is assumed that the flow of offenders into and out of any given state will be equitable over time, i.e., that the total number of offenders received for supervision will be approximately equal to the total number sent elsewhere. If this assumption should prove false there are serious implications for supervision caseloads in states which receive more offenders than they send. If services provided under the compact are expanded as the NIC report suggests may occur, it may be appropriate for states, particularly during times of declining resources, to assess their participation history and to project anticipated impacts on supervising agencies. To the best of our knowledge no state has published an assessment of the impact on agency caseloads of participation in the interstate compact. This paper is a preliminary effort to develop such an assessment for the state of Alaska.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The state of Alaska entered the interstate compact in 1962, three years after achieving statehood. At the time it entered the compact the state had no prisons and was still behaving as the territory it had so recently been. Convicted offenders were incarcerated under the auspices of the federal bureau of prisons

and the new state was accustomed to the movement of prisoners both for incarceration and for supervision purposes.

When corrections became a responsibility of the new state it was placed under the cabinet level Department of Health and Social Services as the Division of Corrections. In 1984 the division had grown so large both in population and number of facilities that it became a department with cabinet level status and its own commissioner. The Department of Corrections includes a division of probation which provides supervision for both probationers and parolees. Thus a single agency is responsible for all community supervision of state offenders. This agency is also responsible for interstate compact transfers.

The state is so large geographically that the Department of Corrections is organized into three regions. Probation/parole field services are administered by a regional administrator and each region has district officers (see Figure 2).

Major increases in the state's population have seen corresponding increases in the probation/parole population. Between 1976 and 1986 the number of offenders under community supervision by the division of probation rose from an annualized figure of 1010 to 2153. This dramatic growth in the total population has resulted in proportional growth in the caseloads of individual probation officers. A perception among many officers that there has been an increase in the number of offenders requiring supervision under the interstate compact has led to an interest in assessing the impact upon average caseloads of the states par-

ticipating in the compact.

The chief difficulty with such an assessment has been the lack of adequate data. No records of interstate transactions have been kept by either the Department of Corrections or its former parent agency, Health and Social Services. Because a major change in computer information systems was undertaken in 1984, information from prior years is no longer retrievable.

Equity cannot be assumed on a yearly basis and must be measured over a period of years. Fortunately, a printout of all persons under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections was discovered and made available to the researchers. The data was maintained for case management purposes and did not include information which we consider crucial to a thorough assessment of the impact of the state's participation in the interstate compact. Nevertheless, this was the only information available and was used to draw some preliminary conclusions which were based on aggregate numbers and could not, for the most part, be refined. The information available included state of original jurisdiction (sending state), destination (receiving state), date of birth, date supervision ends, sex, age, race, and status (probation or parole).

Data on interstate transfers was extracted from the printout, recoded and processed. Only some questions could be answered by the available data. The two missing areas we feel are most important to the study were intake data began and instant offense. Without knowing the length of supervision for each

offender under the compact it was not possible to get an accurate picture of the changes in interstate caseloads on an annual basis. While incoming offenders require a long-term commitment and have a major impact on supervision caseloads, outgoing offenders do require time and effort for paperwork and processing and must be considered in an impact assessment.

Knowing the instant offense for each case processed would give a more refined picture of the impact on caseloads. Persons under supervision are designated minimum, medium, or maximum and the amount of time devoted to the probationer/parolee varies according to the designation. Since offense behavior is part of this assignment it would be useful to have this information. Such information would also be helpful in assessing impact. Numbers alone do not tell the story in assessing the equity of the exchange. A state may send out more offenders than it receives, but if most of those it sends have committed minor property crimes while most of those it receives have committed crimes against persons we require a different definition of equity. With such limitations in mind we turn to our findings.

RESEARCH RESULTS

During the seven years between 1975 and 1984 Alaska processed 1551 offenders through the Interstate Compact; 999 were received for supervision (64.4% of the total) and 552 (35.6%) were sent to other states. It is significant that 45% more offenders entered the state than left it.

An effort was made to compare this figure with the total

field supervision cases for the same years but similar data was not maintained. Although aggregate annual case load data for these years is available from the Department of Corrections there is no way to break this information into a count of individuals. The data collected for the present study involved information on 1551 individuals. Since length of supervision varies from two years to as many as twenty, the yearly overlap of individuals on the annualized case load is considerable. At the same time the case management information for the study did not contain intake dates so annualized case loads could not be measured.

As an example of the problem of examining case load impact a hand search of available compact records for the city of Anchorage was conducted in the summer of 1986. The records were for all currently active Interstate Compact cases. The total number of active interstate cases under supervision in Anchorage was 547, but the cases had varied intake dates. Of the 547 cases, 56 began supervision in 1983, 105 began in 1984, 188 in 1985 and 197 in 1986. Supervision overlap is part of the annualized caseload information collected by the Department of Corrections. The count is made on a specific census date and, if there is concern about the impact of the state's Interstate Compact caseload, compact supervisees could be counted on the same date and records kept of these as a percentage of the total.

The researchers expected that the outgoing transfers would tend to be on parole rather than on probation. A current investigation of case records seemed to indicate that a substantial number of state offenders who were incarcerated in federal

prisons seemed to choose to be on parole in the states where they had been incarcerated. In fact, parolees constituted fewer than 25% of the total sample and were proportionally less of the outgoing offenders than of the incoming ones. Probationers are more likely to have been first offenders or to have been involved in less serious crimes than parolees are and therefore this proportion might be viewed as positive in assessing impacts on total caseloads.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The movement of Interstate Compact offenders to and from Alaska was largely a regional one. The major exchange was with states on the West Coast. Of the 999 offenders received by the state more than half (50.8%) were from the states of Washington, California, and Oregon. Of those sent out of Alaska (N=552), 51.8% went to the same three states. Information on the exchange is presented in Figure 3. The same five states appear as both states of original jurisdiction and as states of destination in the same order and in approximately the same proportion. The regional nature of the exchange was not unexpected. Movement between Alaska and Washington, California and Oregon is common for persons other than offenders. Many jobs in Alaska require skills which can be acquired in these states (e.g., forestry, fishing, construction). Many Alaskans go to these states for education and training and many have relatives in these states. The inclusion of Texas among the top five exchange states is also not surprising since, during the period under study, the oil fields were being developed and the trans-Alaska pipeline was

under construction.

The ratio of males to females in the sample was 9:1. This ratio held constant for both incoming and outgoing offenders. The proportion is different for the state's incarcerated population in which females constitute closer to 6% of the total but comparison with supervised populations cannot be made for reasons already noted.

Racially the offenders in the sample are overwhelmingly white (see Figure 3) which reflects the total urban population of the state. It was expected that Alaska Natives would constitute the largest minority in the sample since this group is 33% of the incarcerated population in Alaska. Alaska Natives include both Eskimos and several Indian groups (Athabaskan, Tlingit, etc.) but even when these two groups are combined they constitute a smaller percentage of the totals than do blacks. Some Alaska Natives prefer not to label themselves Indian and may be included as others. However, this group is so undefined that we cannot make this an assumption.

It is interesting that the number of blacks in the incoming group is identical to that in the outgoing group. As a proportion of the totals twice as many blacks leave the state as enter it under the compact.

The average age of Interstate Compact offenders during the seven-year data collection period was 30.5 years. The mode was 23. A small number of offenders were born before 1920 (N=26). Therefore, during supervision they ranged from age 58 to 80. The

oldest offender was born in 1902, the youngest in 1964. The largest percentage (55.5) were in their twenties while the next largest percentage (28.0) were in their thirties. The remainder were primarily older than this. Only 2% were younger than twenty.

DISCUSSION

At the present time the state of Alaska is in an economic downturn. The Department of Corrections, with less money available, is trying to deal with major increases in population both in correctional institutions and under field service supervision. If the addition to case loads of Interstate Compact transfers is discovered to have a significant impact on the cost and quality of supervision in the state, more careful processing of transfer requests might be undertaken in order to reduce the inflow.

The data collected for this paper was intended to provide background information for a study of the impact on Alaska of the state's participation in the Interstate Compact for probation and parole. Although the current study shows that the state has received almost twice as many transfers as it has sent to other states the cost to Alaska cannot be determined from the available data. There are different costs involved in supervising minimum, medium, and maximum risk supervisees. Without knowing the type of supervision required, this factor cannot be considered. Since 75.4 percent of incoming transfers in the sample were probationers we can infer that most did not require a maximum level of supervision, but more precise information is required for a valid

assessment of cost in probation office time and effort.

Had instant offense information been available for the 1500 offenders in the sample some conclusions might have been drawn both about supervision level and about the risk to the public, particularly in terms of city of destination. In smaller Alaska communities distance supervision is the norm (radio-phone reporting, for example) and site visits are costly since they require air travel. Again we might infer that probation status implies lower risk than parole status, but specific information is required for any valid assessment of public risk and supervision requirements.

Annualized case load data would also be useful for an assessment of the impact on probation field services of participation in the Interstate Compact. We are encouraging the Department to separate Interstate Compact transfers from their annual January census of persons under probation supervision. This step will be of assistance in future assessments of the impact of participation in the Interstate Compact on probation office workload. Our historical assessment is not very useful since we cannot develop any means of measuring Compact transfers as a percentage of total offenders under supervision.

The data in this study were collected as background for an intensive study of Interstate Compact transfers currently under the supervision of probation officers in Anchorage. The study involves all active interstate cases in 1985 (N=368) and includes detailed information from offender files. When this study is

completed incoming and outgoing offenders can be compared on a variety of bases including: instant offense, prior record, employment history, marital status, educational level, length of supervision, reason in Alaska, etc. We have argued that numbers alone do not provide a valid assessment of the impact on the state of participation in the compact.

We would like to know whether the transfers we receive tend to be violent offenders who are a potential danger to the community. We would like to know if they are Alaskans who are "coming home" or if they are residents of other states who appear to be interested in a "new start." We are hoping that the data we have collected on this sample will enable us to make some predictions about the potential these transfers have as rehabilitated citizens of the state. We encourage other states to make a similar attempt to assess this growing group of mobile offenders and the impact they will have on probation case loads and on the communities which receive them.

The historical data presented in this paper underscores the problems involved in using case management data for research purposes. In 1984 the Alaska Department of Corrections adopted a management information system, OBSCIS, which is in wide use throughout the country. OBSCIS (Offender-Based State Correctional Information System) is a case management system with a primary purpose of locating and assessing individuals in the system. It does, however, contain many more data points, than the prior system and has, therefore, more potential for research and policy decision. The problem lies in convincing personnel to

make use of the full potential inherent in the data. The use of case management data to improve case management is obviously important, but OBSCIS provides an opportunity to build a body of information which can be used in policy development, planning and decision-making.

While the current research question is not crucial to the operation of Corrections in Alaska it does serve as an example of the uses to which aggregate information can be put. Tracking information as well as offenders should be included in justice management information systems.

Figure 1. National Data on Interstate Transfers

| Year ¹ | # of Transfers | # States Reporting |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1952 ² | 17,000 | 31 |
| 1955 ² | 23,623 | 42 |
| 1960 | 30,295 | 41 |
| 1964 | 37,588 | 46 |
| 1969 | 43,393 | 49 |
| 1973 | 52,687 | 36 |
| 1976 | 38,197 | 36 |
| 1980 | 62,436 | 36 |
| 1984 | 77,792 | 35 |
| 1986 | 72,385 | 34 |

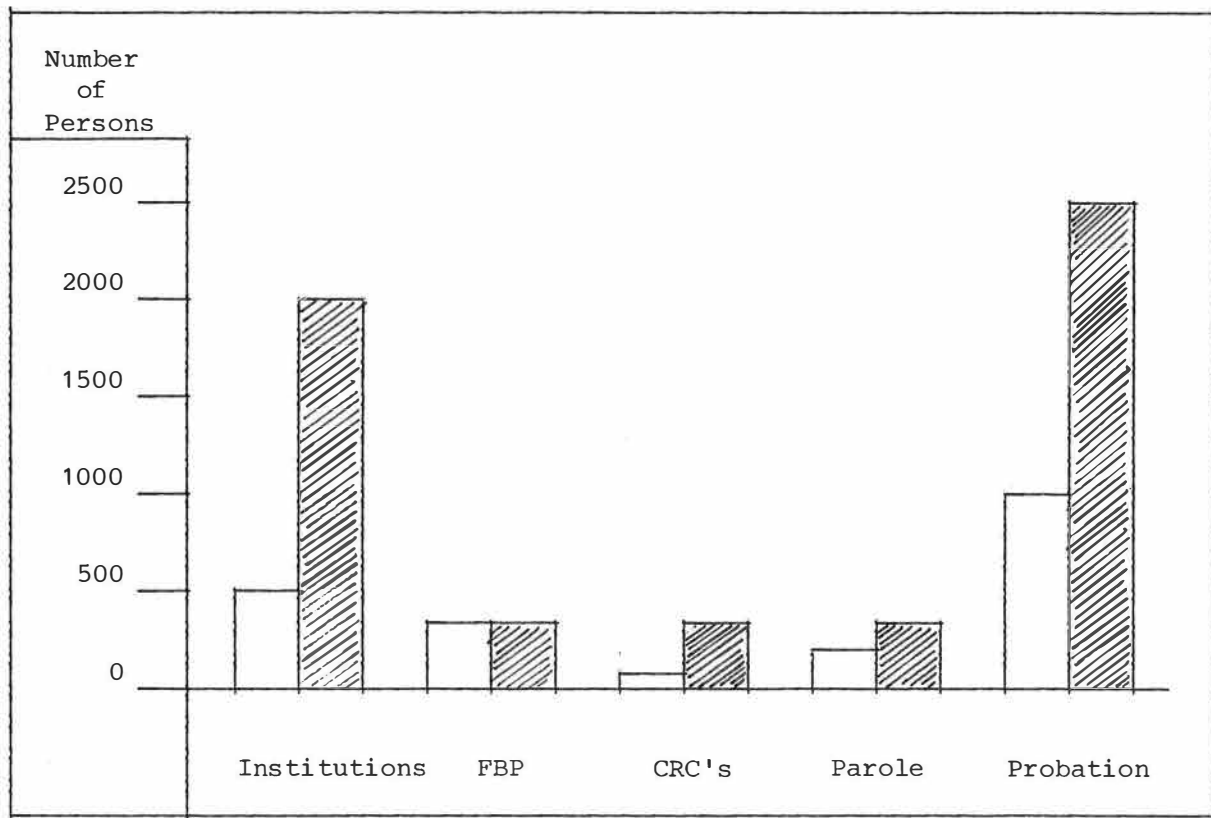
¹ Years were selected on the basis of complete data for all reporting states.

² In 1952 and 1956 only 48 states participated in the compact.

Source: Council of State Governments, Lexington, Kentucky.

Figure 2. ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Population Comparisons, 1980 vs. 1985



Source: Alaska Department of Corrections, Annual Report, 1985. Juneau, AK

Figure 3: States with Highest Level of Exchange with Alaska

| Original Jurisdiction (Received by Alaska) | | | Destination (Left Alaska) | | |
|---|------------|-------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Rank | State | % of Total* | Rank | State | % of Total* |
| 1 | Washington | 24.6 | 1 | Washington | 25.2 |
| 2 | California | 15.8 | 2 | California | 17.4 |
| 3 | Oregon | 10.3 | 3 | Oregon | 9.2 |
| 4 | Texas | 5.6 | 4 | Texas | 6.5 |
| 5 | Florida | 5.1 | 5 | Florida | 3.8 |
| 6 | Montana | 4.0 | 6 | Colorado | 2.2 |
| Total n=999 | | | Total n=552 | | |

Figure 4: Racial Comparisons of Incoming and Outgoing Offenders

| Incoming | | | Outgoing | | |
|----------|-----|------------|----------|-----|------------|
| Race | n | % of Total | Race | n | % of Total |
| White | 851 | 85.1 | White | 441 | 79.9 |
| Black | 59 | 5.9 | Black | 59 | 10.7 |
| Indian | 27 | 2.7 | Hispanic | 20 | 3.6 |
| Asian | 2 | .2 | Indian | 13 | 2.4 |
| Eskimo | 7 | 0.7 | Other | 7 | 1.3 |
| Hispanic | 23 | 2.3 | Eskimo | 5 | 0.9 |
| Other | 3 | 0.3 | Asian | 4 | 0.7 |
| Unkown | 27 | 2.7 | Unknown | 3 | 0.5 |
| Total | 999 | 99.9 | Total | 552 | 100.0 |

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